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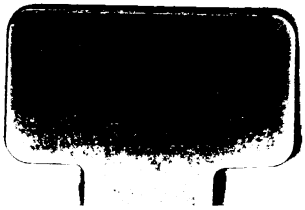

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THE

CHARGE

OF

Thomas Lord Biſhop of *Oxford*

TO THE

CLERGY of his DIOCESE,

In his PRIMARY VISITATION

1738.

Publiſhed at their REQUEST.

LONDON:

Printed for J. and J. PEMBERTON, at the *Golden-Buck* againſt St. *Dunſtan*'s Church in *Fleetſtreet*. MDCCXXXVIII.

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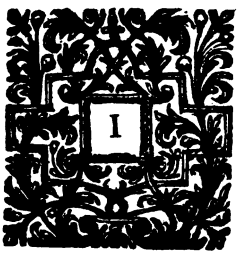
Reverend Brethren,



Am very ſenſible you cannot meet together on this Occaſion, without making deep Reflections on the Loſs, which you have ſuffered for the publick Good; by the Removal of a Paſtor, whom the Experience of ſo many Years hath taught you to eſteem and honour ſo highly. It is your farther Unhappineſs, that He is ſucceeded by a Perſon, very unequal to the Care of this conſpicuous and important Dioceſe. But your Humanity and your Piety will, I doubt not, incline you, both to accept and to aſſiſt the Endeavours of one, who can aſſure you with very great Truth, that he is earneſtly deſirous of being as uſeful to you all as he can, and ſeriouſly concerned for the Intereſts of Religion and of this Church. Would to God there were leſs need of expreſſing a Concern for them, than there is at preſent!

MEN have always complained of their own Times: and always with too much Reaſon. But though it is natural, to think thoſe Evils the greateſt, which we feel ourſelves; and therefore Miſtakes are eaſily made, in comparing one Age with another: yet this we cannot be miſtaken in, that an open and profeſſed Diſregard to Religion is be-

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come, through a Variety of unhappy Cauſes, the diſtinguiſhing Character of the preſent Age; that this Evil is grown to a great Height in the Metropolis of the Nation; is daily ſpreading through every Part of it; and, bad in itſelf as any can be, muſt of neceſſity bring in moſt others after it. Indeed it hath already brought in, ſuch Diſſoluteneſs and Contempt of Principle in the Higher Part of the World, and ſuch profligate Intemperance and Fearleſneſs of committing Crimes in the Lower, as muſt, if this Torrent of Impiety ſtop not, become abſolutely fatal. And God knows, far from ſtopping, it receives, through the ill Deſigns of ſome Perſons and the Inconſiderateneſs of others, a continual Increaſe. Chriſtianity is now ridiculed and railed at, with very little Reſerve: and the Teachers of it, without any at all. Indeed with reſpect to us, the Rule which moſt of our Adverſaries appear to have ſet themſelves is, to be, at all adventures, as bitter as they can: and they follow it, not only beyond Truth, but beyond Probability: aſſerting the very worſt things of us without foundation, and exaggerating every thing without mercy: imputing the Faults, and ſometimes imaginary Faults, of particular Perſons to the whole Order; and then declaiming againſt us all promiſcuouſly, with ſuch wild Vehemence, as in any Caſe but ours, they themſelves would think, in the higheſt degree, unjuſt and cruel. Or if ſometimes a few Exceptions are made, they are uſually made only to divide us amongſt ourſelves: to deceive one Part of us, and throw

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throw a greater Odium upon the other. Still were these Invectives only to affect Us personally, dear as our Reputations are and ought to be to us, the Mischief would be small, in comparison of what it is. But the Consequence hath been, as it naturally must, that Disregard to Us hath greatly increased the Disregard to publick Worship and Instruction: that many are grown prejudiced against Religion; many more, indifferent about it and unacquainted with it. And the Emissaries of the *Romish* Church, taking the Members of ours at this unhappy Disadvantage, have begun to reap great Harvests, in the Field which hath thus been prepared for them, by the Labours of those, who would be thought their most irreconcileable Enemies.

YET, however melancholy the View before us appears, we have no reason to be discouraged: for let us take care of our Duty, and God will take care of the Event. But we have great reason to think seriously what our Duty on this Occasion is, and stir up each other to the performance of it: that where-ever the Guilt of these things may fall, it may not fall on our Heads. *For it must needs be that Offences come: but wo to that Man, by whom the Offence cometh.* Our Grief for the Decay of Religion might be attended with much Comfort in regard to ourselves, could we but truly say, that no Faults or Infirmities of ours had ever given Advantages against it. But though, God be thanked, we are far from being what our Adversaries would represent us; whose Reproaches perhaps were never

Matth. 7.

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ver leſs deſerved, than now when they are the moſt violent: yet it muſt be owned, we are not by any means, even the beſt of us, what we ought to be. And the preſent State of things calls loudly upon us, to correct our Miſtakes, to ſupply our Deficiencies, and do all we are able for the Honour of God, and the Happineſs of Mankind.

IF we can be unconcerned now, we have neither Piety nor common Prudence in us. And if we are concerned in earneſt, we ſhall be very deſirous, both to avoid all wrong Methods of ſhewing it, and to make uſe of all right ones.

COMPLAINING of our Superiors for thoſe Evils, which perhaps they cannot prevent; or complaining of them with Diſreſpect, for what we may apprehend they could prevent, would both be undutiful and imprudent Conduct: would give our Adverſaries Joy, and do our Cauſe harm. Indeed to beg earneſtly of God, that He would direct the Hearts of thoſe, who preſide over the publick Welfare; and humbly to repreſent to Them, on all fit Occaſions, the declining State of Religion, the Importance and the Means of preſerving it; theſe things are unqueſtionable Duties. But then we muſt always approve ourſelves, at the ſame time, conſcientiouſly loyal both in Word and Deed; reaſonable in our Expectations; ſincerely grateful for the Protection we are aſſured of enjoying; and duly ſenſible, that every thing of Value to us, in this World, depends on the Support of that Government, which we now live under. We cannot be

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good

good Men, if we are bad Subjects: and we are not wiſe Men, if we permit ourſelves to be ſuſpected of it.

A SECOND proper Caution is, That to ſpeak unfavourably of Liberty, Religious or Civil, inſtead of carefully diſtinguiſhing Both from the many Abuſes of them, which we daily ſee; or to encourage any other Reſtraints on either, than publick Utility makes evidently needful; can only ſerve to increaſe that Jealouſy, which being in former Ages grounded too well, hath been moſt induſtriouſly heighten'd, when there never was ſo little pretence of ground for it; that the Claims of the Clergy are hurtful to the Rights of Mankind. It concerns us greatly to remove ſo dangerous a Prejudice againſt us, as this: not by renouncing thoſe Powers, which the Goſpel hath given us; for we are bound to aſſert them: but by convincing the World, that they are perfectly innocent ones; and avoiding all appearance of aſſuming what we have no right to: by ſhewing our abhorrence of Tyranny, eſpecially over the Conſciences of Men; and ſatisfying them fully, if poſſible, that *we preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus, Lord;* 2 Cor. iv. 5. *and ourſelves, their Servants for his ſake.* Then with reſpect to the Privileges we derive from human Authority: as, on the one hand, receding from any of them without Cauſe is only inviting freſh Encroachments, and giving needleſs Advantages to ſuch as will be ſure to loſe none: ſo, on the other, ſtraining them too far is the likelieſt way

to deſtroy them all at once: and both our Uſefulneſs and our Security depend very much, on our appearing plainly, to deſire nothing inconſiſtent with the common Good; to have the trueſt Concern for all reaſonable Liberty, and to be zealous only againſt Licentiouſneſs and Confuſion.

THIRDLY, If we ſhould be tempted to oppoſe Profaneneſs, by encouraging the oppoſite Extreme of Superſtition: this alſo would be unjuſtifiable in itſelf; would have bad Effects upon as many as we might miſlead; and give great Opportunities to all that ſhould ſee them miſled, either of accuſing Religion, or expoſing us, as Corrupters of Religion. Not that we are to give up inconſiderately, whatever ſome Perſons are pleaſed to charge with Superſtition: for there would be no end of Conceſſions at that rate: but only to avoid encouraging any thing that can be juſtly charged with it; and then we ſhall ſtand upon ſure ground. For nothing can be more unjuſt, than thoſe Imputations of it, which our Adverſaries are ſo fond of throwing, ſome upon Chriſtianity itſelf, others on the Doctrine and Worſhip of that Church, which, through God's good Providence, we have the Happineſs to be Members of.

ANOTHER very pernicious Error would be, if we ſhould think to ſerve our Cauſe by intemperate Warmth in it. Chriſtian Zeal indeed is a Duty, that never was more needful, and never leſs ſhewn. But Paſſion will do no good. If expreſſed againſt thoſe who are indifferent about Religion, it will turn

turn them into Enemies: if againſt the Enemies of Religion, it will make them yet more vehement Enemies. Beſides, the extravagant things that Men ſay and attempt againſt us and our Profeſſion, are not always deſigned Injuries; but frequently the Effects of Miſrepreſentations, and Prejudices that have imperceptibly taken hold on Perſons, who otherwiſe mean tolerably well. Now Mildneſs to ſuch as theſe, is but Juſtice: and to all others, it is Prudence. Railing is the Province our Adverſaries have choſen: and let us leave it to them. For whatever Succeſs they may meet with that way, as indeed they excel in it, we ſhall meet with none: but only make the Spirit of Chriſtianity be miſunderſtood and ill ſpoken of, by our own want of it. Therefore how injuriouſly ſoever we may be treated, let us return neither injurious nor harſh Treatment for it: nor endeavour to mark out thoſe Perſons for Objects of popular Hatred, who are ever ſo unwearied in labouring to make us ſo. Yet at the ſame time, we muſt never court irreligious Men by wrong Compliances; never contribute to increaſe their Power of doing Harm; never deſert our Duty, either for Fear of them or Favour from them. But then let us defend both Religion and ourſelves, with that Fairneſs and Decency, as well as Courage, which becomes our Function: acknowledge ingenuouſly whatever can be alledged againſt us with Truth; only claiming equitable Allowances; and where Charges are untrue, yet uſe mild Expoſtulations,

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not Reproaches; and try to ſhame our Oppoſers by the Reaſonableneſs of what we ſay, rather than exaſperate them by the Vehemence of it. They indeed have little Cauſe either to complain or to triumph, if, under ſuch groſs Provocations as they give, our Temper ſometimes fails: but we have great Cauſe to do our utmoſt, that it fail not.

AND if undue Severity of Speech muſt be forborn towards profeſſed Enemies; much more to thoſe, who may, for ought we know, deſign themſelves for Friends. Indeed when it is evident, that Men only put on a Pretence of wiſhing well to Chriſtianity, or the Teachers of it; and whilſt they affect to charge us with Uncharitableneſs for queſtioning their Sincerity, would deſpiſe us for believing them: there we muſt be allowed to ſee what plainly appears; and to ſpeak of them, both as Adverſaries, and unfair ones. Or when Doctrines, whatever the Intention of propagating them be, appear inconſiſtent either with the whole or any part of our Religion; it is no Uncharitableneſs, but our Duty, to lay open the Falſhood and the Danger of them. Nay, ſuppoſing only the legal Eſtabliſhment of Religion, or ſome Branch of it, be attacked; yet the Attempt may both be injurious enough to us, and detrimental enough to the Publick, to deſerve a vigorous Oppoſition. But to ſhew Paſſion and Bitterneſs in any of theſe Caſes; to take pleaſure in making Mens Miſtakes or Deſigns thought worſe than they are; to judge harſhly of them with reſpect to another World, or

expoſe them to ill Uſage in this; to refuſe them due Allowances for human Infirmity, or be more backward to own their Merits, than to ſee their Faults: ſuch Behaviour, inſtead of promoting Truth, will prejudice the World againſt it; will give Unbelievers dreadful Advantages, and for ever prevent that Union amongſt Chriſtians, which would procure us, above all things, the Eſteem of Men and the Bleſſing of God.

FROM theſe improper Methods of ſupporting Religion, let us now proceed to the proper ones. And they will naturally fall under the general Heads, of our Inſtructions and our Lives.

GIVING Inſtruction requires Knowledge. And therefore, as a competent Degree of it is juſtly expected of Perſons, before they enter into Holy Orders: ſo when they enter, the Care of making a continual Progreſs in it is ſolemnly promiſed by them, and covenanted for with them. What may be a very good Beginning, is by no means a ſufficient Stock to go on with: and even that will leſſen, if no Pains be taken to increaſe it. Continued Application then is a Duty of Importance. Perſons of lower Abilities and Attainments are in danger, without it, of being uſeleſs and deſpiſed: And they who ſet out with greater Advantages, are bound to endeavour at doing, in proportion, greater Services to the Church of God. Without exception therefore, all who are engaged in ſo ſerious an Employment as ours, if they have any Regard either to their Duty or their Character, muſt take

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care, not to be more remarkable for their Diverſions, than their Studies; nor indolently to trifle their time away, inſtead of employing it to good Purpoſes. And though moſt Parts of Learning will be uſeful to us, and all Parts ornamental; yet we muſt be ſure to remember, what we have been ſolemnly admoniſhed of, that no Attention to any thing elſe, ought ever to draw us away from the Purſuit of ſuch Knowledge, as is properly Theological. For to excel in other things, and be deficient in that, cannot but caſt a grievous Reflexion; either on us, for not ſtudying what we profeſs; or on our Profeſſion, as having little in it worth ſtudying. Our principal Buſineſs therefore muſt be, to obtain a thorough Acquaintance with the Chriſtian Faith: firſt the Grounds, then the Doctrines of it. And the previous Qualifications for attempting this are, a due Knowledge of the Rules of right Reaſoning, and of the moral and religious Truths which Nature teaches; of the State of the World in its earlier Ages, and in that when Chriſtianity firſt appeared. Theſe Preparations being made, the great thing requiſite in the next place is a diligent Search into Holy Scripture. For there it is, that both the authentick Syſtem of our Belief, and the chief Evidence for it, are exhibited to our View. Scripture therefore above all things the Infidel endeavours to ridicule; the miſtaken Chriſtian, to wreſt in Support of his Errors: and if we deſire, either to confute Them, or to ſatisfy ourſelves; our only way muſt be, to underſtand it well.

For which end it is quite neceſſary, that we make the original Language, at leaſt of the New Teſtament, familiar to us: and were that of the Old more commonly ſtudied, the Advantages would be very conſiderable.

IN order to ſee clearly, on what Grounds our Belief ſtands; together with the ſacred Volumes themſelves, the Writings of ſuch learned Perſons as have proved their Authority, and vindicated their Accounts of things, muſt be carefully read; and attentively compared with thoſe Objections againſt them, which have been revived of late, dreſſed up with ſo much Art, and ſpread abroad with ſo much Diligence. For in our preſent Circumſtances we are always liable to be attacked: and conſider what an unhappy Triumph it would afford, ſhould we be found unprovided of a rational Defence. It is very true, the general Evidence, which we have for our Faith, is abundantly ſufficient of itſelf, to overbalance many Difficulties concerning it, and ever ſo many Cavils againſt it. But yet our being unqualified to give more particular Anſwers where they can be given, as indeed there are few Caſes where they cannot, may often prove a great Reproach to Us, and a great Stumbling-block to others.

NEXT to the Grounds of Religion, the Doctrines of it, eſpecially the more important and diſputed ones, ought to be ſtudied, with ſuch Diligence and Impartiality, as may beſt diſcover to us the Nature of every Opinion, and the Force of every Argument:

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gument: that ſo we may neither load Chriſtianity with what doth not belong to it; nor betray, inſtead of defending it, by giving up what doth; but faithfully *keep that which is committed to our Truſt*, both entire and unmixed. To ſecure this great End, we muſt ever adhere ſtrictly to the Word of God, fairly interpreted by the Help of all ſuch means as Providence hath given us: and carefully avoid, on the one Hand, Fondneſs of Novelty; and on the other, over-great Reverence of Antiquity, eſpecially ſuch as comes ſhort of the earlieſt. But againſt the former of theſe, it is peculiarly needful to caution the riſing Generation; whom the Raſhneſs of Youth, and the petulant Spirit of the preſent Age, too often hurries into a ſtrange Vehemence for any Imagination they have happened to take up; and prompts them to fly out againſt eſtabliſhed Doctrines, without having always the patience even to underſtand them. Such therefore ſhould be exhorted to learn a proper Degree, both of Silence and Suſpence, till cooler Thought, and farther Enquiry, make them fitter Judges of Things. But beſides thoſe Controverſies, which this Caution chiefly relates to; that between the Papiſts and Us deſerves at preſent to be well ſtudied, by ſuch of you as live in the Neighbourhood of any. For ſeldom have they ſhewn more Zeal or more Artifice, than of late, in their Attempts of making Proſelytes. And therefore it is of great Conſequence, that we provide our ſelves againſt them, with a ſufficient Knowledge of their real Doctrines, their more ſpecious Pleas, and

1 Tim. vi. 20.

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the proper Anſwers to them. Another Subject, with which we are concerned to be well acquainted, is what relates to the Government and Worſhip, Diſcipline and Eſtabliſhment of our own Church. Different Parts of our Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution are frequently cenſured by different ſorts of Perſons, with very different Views: though indeed the moſt oppoſite of them have appeared for ſome time unaccountably diſpoſed to unite againſt us, and Believers to join with Infidels in uſing their Chriſtian Brethren ill. It may therefore be of great Uſe, to inform ourſelves diligently concerning every Thing of this Nature, which is ſpoken of to our Prejudice; and be always ready to ſhew the genuine State of the Caſe, with Mildneſs and Fairneſs. But no Controverſies, however needful, muſt be ſuffered to divert our Attention from what is of all Things the moſt needful, the Study of practical Religion, and of the common Duties of Life. Theſe are the Things, which Mankind are moſt apt to fail in, and moſt concerned not to fail in: and therefore ſpending much time upon them, obtaining a thorough Inſight into them, and having a deep Senſe of them, is the very Foundation of doing good, both to others and to our own Souls.

A COMPETENT Proviſion of Knowledge being ſuppoſed, the next Thing is, communicating it to thoſe who are under our Care, in ſuch manner as their Circumſtances require.

THE Proofs of Religion, both natural and revealed, all Men ſhould be taught, and eſpecially at preſent,

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preſent, in the moſt intelligible and convincing Manner. As for the Objections againſt either: ſuch as it may be ſuppoſed they have thought or heard of, ſhould be diſtinctly anſwered; but the reſt obviated only, as Occaſion offers. For to enter into them farther, would be miſpending Time. Next to the Truth of Religion, they ſhould have its Importance laid before them. The Neceſſity of a moral Life moſt Men will own in general Terms: only what they are pleaſed to call ſo, is often a very immoral one, both with reſpect to their Fellow-Creatures, and the Government of themſelves. But Regard to Piety is ſtrangely loſt, even amongſt Perſons that are otherwiſe tolerably ſerious. Many have laid aſide all Appearances of it: and others who would ſeem to keep them up, do it with evident Marks of Indifference and Contempt. It ſhould therefore be induſtriouſly ſhewn and inculcated, that an inward Senſe of Love and Duty to God, founded on juſt Conceptions of him, and expreſſing itſelf in frequent Acts of Worſhip, conſtant Obedience and Reſignation to him, is in Truth *the*
Mat. xxii. 38. *firſt and great Commandment*, the principal and moſt important of moral Obligations. But then, beſides thoſe Inſtances of Piety which Reaſon requires of us, there are others, founded on Relations equally real, and conſequently deſerving equal Regard, enjoined by Revelation. The utmoſt Care therefore ought to be uſed, conſidering the preſent Diſpoſition of the World, to convince Men of what Moment the Doctrines and Duties of the Goſpel

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are.

are. To make Reaſon ſufficient for nothing in Religion, is to overturn every thing. But to inſiſt on its Inſufficiency for many moſt valuable Purpoſes, which Revelation is fully ſufficient for, and on the Neceſſity of obſerving whatever God hath thought fit to command, this is doing but common Juſtice, though a very ſeaſonable Piece of Juſtice, to the Doctrine of our Bleſſed Saviour and the Authority of our Maker.

WHEN once Men are brought to underſtand the Value of Chriſtianity, the next thing is, to give them a proportionable Sollicitude for it: to make them obſerve, how viſibly the Belief and Practice of it decay, and how dreadful the Conſequences muſt be and are: to ſhew them, that Religion is not the Concern of the Clergy merely, but the common Concern of all Men; the great thing, on which publick and private Happineſs depend in this Life, as well as eternal Felicity in the next: that therefore, if they have any Value for theſe important Intereſts, they muſt take the neceſſary Means of ſecuring them: their Children, their Servants and Dependants muſt be diligently watched over and inſtructed; private Devotion muſt be practiſed, Family-Worſhip revived, and the Service of God in the Church regularly and ſeriouſly attended upon. For laying aſide theſe things hath almoſt baniſhed Religion from amongſt us: and nothing, but reſtoring them, can bring it back. Piety is indeed ſeated in the Heart: but to give it no vent in outward Expreſſion, is to ſtifle and extinguiſh it. Neg-

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lecting the publick Exerciſe of Religion, is deſtroying the publick Regard to it: and teaching Men to deſpiſe their own Form of Religion, is enough very often to make them deſpiſe it under any Form.

GREAT Pains have been taken by our Adverſaries to give the World an ill Opinion of Religious Inſtruction: and we muſt take equal Pains to give them a good one of it; by repreſenting to them, both the natural Influence it hath, and the divine Authority that enjoins it. But after all, the only effectual Conviction will be that of Experience. And therefore the chief Point is, to endeavour that Men may feel the Benefit of our teaching: feel at leaſt it is their own Fault, not ours, if they do not become the wiſer, the better and happier for it. To this end we muſt all dwell often and ſtrongly on the great Duties and great Failures of Duty in common Life: firſt explaining the Obligations of Religion ſo as that they may be practiſed; then inſiſting on it, that they muſt: entring into the Particulars of each with ſuch Plainneſs, that every one may clearly ſee his own Faults laid before him; yet with ſuch Prudence, that no one may ſo much as imagine himſelf perſonally pointed at: and taking the ſtricteſt Care, that no Part of what we ſay may ſeem in the leaſt to proceed from our own Paſſions, or our own Intereſts; but all appear evidently to flow from a true Concern for the good of thoſe that hear us. Diligent Conſideration, what our Subject and our ſeveral Characters will bear us out in, muſt direct us, when to give our Judgment with

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Diffidence, when to lay ſtreſs upon it: in what Caſes to *exhort with all long-ſuffering*; in what, to *rebuke with all Authority*. But which ſoever we do, neither our Language ſhould be florid, nor our Manner Theatrical: For theſe things only raiſe an uſeleſs Admiration in weak Perſons, and produce great Contempt in judicious ones. Nor yet on the other hand, ſhould our Expreſſions be mean, or our Behaviour lifeleſs: but Both muſt be ſuitable to the Employment we are upon; Both ſuch as come naturally from the Heart of the Speaker, and therefore will naturally move that of the Hearer.

2 Tim. iv. 2. Tit. i. 15.

To this our publick Teaching it will be a great Help, and indeed a valuable Part of it, if we perform the ſeveral Offices of our excellent Liturgy devoutly and properly: neither with an irreverent Precipitation, nor a tedious Slowneſs; neither in a flat and languid Manner, nor yet with an affected Livelineſs, or a Vehemence ill-placed or over-done: but ſo as may beſt expreſs the Senſe and the Importance of what we read; and, by ſhewing our own Attention to it, engage that of all around us.

BESIDES our general Inſtructions, it is very needful, that we give the Youth under our Care, in particular, an early Knowledge and Love of Religion, that may abide with them; and ſtand the Trials, to which their riper Years will of courſe be expoſed. I hope you are all diligent in that moſt uſeful Work of Catechizing: and have done your utmoſt to prepare for Confirmation, thoſe whom you preſent to me. And I earneſtly recommend

it to you, that the good Impreſſions, which may well be ſuppoſed to have been made upon their Minds at this Seaſon, be not ſuffer'd to wear off again; but be improved, by ſtill farther Exhortations, and leading them, as ſoon as poſſible, to the Holy Communion, into ſettled Habits of Religion and Virtue. But, though all the Youth deſerve our peculiar Attention; yet if any of them be educated in Charity-Schools under our Inſpection, theſe we ſhould think ourſelves more nearly concerned for, than the reſt: and by firſt taking care, to have them taught whatever is proper, and nothing elſe, then making known the good Management they are under; put an end to thoſe Accuſations, of their learning Idleneſs and Pride, Superſtition and Diſloyalty; which may have been, ſometimes one of them, ſometimes another, in ſome degree deſerved; but have been carried with a wicked Induſtry moſt ſhamefully beyond Truth, and leſſened the Credit of this excellent Inſtitution, even with many good Perſons, to the great Detriment of true Piety.

ANOTHER very uſeful Method of ſpreading the Knowledge of Religion, and teaching Men a ſerious Regard to it, is by diſtributing, or procuring to be diſtributed, ſuch pious Books, eſpecially to the poorer Sort, as are beſt ſuited to their Capacities and Circumſtances. For there is great Variety of them to be had: and at ſo very low Prices, that much Good may be done this way to conſiderable Numbers at once, in a moſt acceptable manner, for a trifling Expence.

BUT

BUT nothing will contribute more to make our publick Inſtructions effectual, than private Converſation, directed with Prudence to the ſame End. The better we are known to Perſons, the greater Influence we may hope to have upon them: and the better we know them, the more diſtinctly we ſhall ſee, how to make uſe of that Influence to good Purpoſes. By repreſenting proper Truths, at fit Times, with a modeſt Freedom, we may very much abate the Prejudices of Men, who have any Fairneſs remaining, both againſt Religion and ourſelves: at leaſt we may prevail on them, for the ſake of publick Order and Example, to keep within the Bounds of Decency; and ſo prevent their doing Harm, if we cannot make them Good. Perſons that err in particular Points of Doctrine, friendly Diſcourſe may ſhew us what led them into their Miſtakes, and enable us to lead them out again. Such as diſſent from our Church-Government and Worſhip, talking amicably with them, and behaving in the ſame manner towards them, if it doth not immediately bring them over, may however bring them nearer to us, both in Judgment and Affection. Such as are faulty in their moral Conduct, ſerious and affectionate Remonſtrances, given in private and kept private, and joined with a Tenderneſs to their Characters in publick, may often do a great deal towards reforming them: and ſooner or later, the Seed thus ſown may ſpring up in their Hearts, and produce happy Fruits. We ſhould not indeed preſs upon Perſons, when

when there is no other Prospect, than that of provoking them: but we ought to watch all Opportunities, whilst there is any Hope left; and not only make it our Endeavour to convert the Mistaken and Vicious, but stir up the Negligent to serious Thought, and the Good themselves to more exemplary Goodness. Especially such Persons of Rank and Influence as we find well disposed, these we must earnestly excite to appear and give Countenance to the Cause of Religion, ever remembring that awful Declaration of our Blessed Lord:

rk viii. 38. *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my Words in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.* We must convince them of the urgent Necessity there is, for interposing in behalf of Piety and Virtue: and suggest to them the Means for engaging with Success in this excellent Employment. Yet must we never spend so much of our Attention on the Higher Part of the World, as to give the least suspicion of neglecting the Lower; whose Number is so much larger, whose Dispositions are usually so much more favourable to Religion, and whose eternal Happiness is of equal Importance to Them, and ought to be of equal Concern to Us: but we must prove we are in earnest in our Work, by making it Our Care, as it was our Master's, that *the Poor*

t. xi. 5. *have the Gospel preached to them.* And one Opportunity of preaching it with singular Advantage, both to the Poor and the Rich, is when Sickness

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brings near to them the View of another Life. At ſome times indeed the Sick may be incapable of attending to Exhortations: at others they may be endangered by them: and at all times great Prudence is requiſite, to avoid the Extremes, of terrifying or indulging them too much. But provided due Caution be uſed in theſe reſpects; laying before them what they ought to be, and reminding them to conſult their own Conſciences what they have been, is a moſt likely Means of exciting in them ſuch Affections and Reſolutions, at that ſeaſon of Recollection and Seriouſneſs, as, through the Bleſſing of Heaven, may produce the happieſt Effects.

To theſe excellent Offices therefore we muſt all of us chearfully apply ourſelves, each in ſuch Degree as his Station requires. If they do require Pains, if they do take up Time, if they are inconſiſtent with agreeable Amuſements, and even interrupt uſeful Studies of other Kinds; yet this is the Buſineſs we have ſolemnly choſen, and the Vows of God are upon us: it is the moſt important and moſt honourable, it ought to be the moſt delightful too, of all Employments: and therefore we have every Reaſon not to ſeek the Means of evading our Duty, but of fulfilling it; and each to *take the overſight of the flock of God* committed to him, *not by conſtraint, but willingly*. For if we only juſt do what we can be puniſhed by our Superiors for neglecting, we muſt neither expect Succeſs nor Reward. 1 Pet. v. 2

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BUT then to ſecure either, the chief thing requiſite is ſtill behind: that our own Tempers and Lives be ſuch, as we ſay thoſe of other Perſons ſhould. For if we, who teach Religion, live or ſuffer our Families to live with little or no Senſe of Religion, what can we poſſibly expect, but that Men will improve ſo palpable an Advantage againſt us to the utmoſt: will ſay, we believe not our own Doctrine; and therefore it deſerves no Belief: or, we practiſe not our own Precepts; and therefore they cannot be practiſed. Thus we ſhall increaſe that Infidelity and Wickedneſs, which our Buſineſs is to oppoſe. Too much of it will be really owing to us: and the whole will be laid upon us. The Enemies of Religion will have the beſt Pretence in the World to ruin us: and the Friends of it grow unconcerned for us, and ready to give us up to them. But were theſe Conſequences not to follow; ſtill very bad ones muſt follow. Men irreligious or vicious themſelves, cannot be hearty in oppoſing Irreligion and Vice: they cannot do it with Boldneſs, if they were hearty: and could they be ever ſo bold, it muſt ſit much too ill upon them, to have any good Effect. Wrong-minded Perſons will be furniſhed with the moſt plauſible Excuſe imaginable for diſregarding them entirely: and the righteſt-minded Perſons that ever were, cannot, if they would, regard them as they ought. This will be the Caſe, even with reſpect to their publick Teaching: and as for private Admonitions, they will ſeldom have the Face to venture upon them, and never ſucceed

in them: whereas every Word that comes from an Exemplary Man, hath great Weight; and his bare Example is moſt valuable Inſtruction of itſelf. But were a bad Life not to hinder at all the Succeſs of our Miniſtry; yet we muſt remember, it will abſolutely hinder the Salvation of our Souls; and ſubject us to that *ſorer Puniſhment, of which he may well be thought worthy, who teaching others, teacheth not himſelf, but through breaking the Law diſhonoureth God.* Heb. x. 29. Rom. ii. 21, 23.

NOR is it ſufficient by any Means for us to be guilty of no Vice. This is ſmall Praiſe for one of our Order. We are bound to be Patterns of the moſt diligent Practice of Virtue, and the ſtricteſt Regard to Religion: and we ſhall never make others zealous for what we ourſelves appear indifferent about. It is very true, that peculiarly in our Caſe, the Generality of the World both expect and find fault, quite beyond Reaſon: and doubtleſs they are much to blame in doing ſo. But then ſurely we are no leſs to blame, if, when we know the Severity with which our Conduct will be examined, we do not watch over it with equal Severity ourſelves; and take the only way to be looked on as good Men, that is, being ſuch undeniably. And whoever hath a due Senſe of this Obligation, will conſcientiouſly *abſtain*, not only *from all Evil*, but *all Appearance* of it too. Such a one, for Inſtance, far from ever offending againſt Temperance, will be exemplary in it: and think the Imputation of being *mighty to drink Wine* almoſt as infamous, as that of being 1 Theſſ. v. 22. Iſai. v. 22.

overcome by it. Far from being guilty of Indecency in his Behaviour or Diſcourſe, he will keep at a Diſtance from every thing liable to the Conſtruction of it. Far from being remarkable for Luxury and Delicacy in his Manner of living or appearing, he will be ſure to preſerve himſelf, on all Occaſions, at leaſt as remote from Indulgence, as he is from Auſterity. And though he will never diſguſt the Perſons he converſes with, by a Gravity affected or ill timed: yet he will be equally careful, never to expoſe himſelf, by a Lightneſs of Carriage unbecoming his Function; nor let any thing be a Part of his Character, much leſs a diſtinguiſhing Part, that can only tend to lower it. For we can never be uſeful, if we are deſpiſed: and we ſhall be deſpiſed, if we will give Opportunities for it. Even they who ſeem pleaſed with us, will think meanly of us inwardly: and perhaps of the whole Order, for our ſakes.

YET at the ſame time, we ſhall be greatly miſtaken, if we aim to avoid Contempt by Haughtineſs: which will only add Hatred to it. Our Rule therefore muſt be, to expreſs, in every thing, Condeſcenſion to the lower Part of the World, without being improperly familiar; and Reſpect to the Upper, without being ſervile: recommending ourſelves at once to the Love and Eſteem of both, by a mild kind of Dignity and ingenuous Simplicity, kept up through our whole Behaviour. Mildneſs of Temper is the Duty of every Man: but eſpecially required of Us;* and abſolutely neceſſary, both

* Matth. v. 16.
1 Tim. iii. 3.
2 Tim. ii. 24

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to our preſerving Regard, and doing Service in the World. Therefore, whatever Provocations we meet with from thoſe we live amongſt, as indeed we often meet with great ones, it neither belongs to our Character, nor will be for our Intereſt, to take Offence and expreſs Reſentment; but by Prudence and Patience to *overcome Evil with Good.* Rom. xii. 21. For we ſhall often do it this way, and never any other. Inſtead of being engaged in Enmities of our own, it ſhould be our Endeavour to compoſe the Differences of other Perſons: not by intermeddling in their Affairs when we are not called to it; but by taking advantage of every fit Opportunity given us, for diſpoſing them to a mutual good Opinion, where there is room for it; or at leaſt, to mutual good-will. Too many Occaſions indeed for friendly Interpoſition, our unhappy Party-Diſputes furniſh us with, had we no other. Entring into theſe with Vehemence, and that Injuſtice which never fails to accompany Vehemence, is what all Men ſhould avoid: but we, who muſt caution them againſt it, ſhould avoid it with uncommon Care; ſhould religiouſly pay that Reſpect to every one, which is their Due, eſpecially to our Superiors; think well of Mens Actions and Deſigns, unleſs we have evident Cauſe to think otherwiſe; judge with Modeſty, where perhaps we are not qualified to judge; and whatever our Opinion be, preſerve our Behaviour inoffenſive; give the leaſt Provocation that may be to bad Men of any Side; and act in ſuch manner, as may gain us, if poſſi-

ble, the united Esteem of good Men of all Sides. For theirs is the Friendship, of which we ought to be ambitious. Familiarities with profane and vicious Persons, beyond what necessary Civility or a real Prospect of reforming them requires, will, whatever we may promise ourselves from their Favour or Interest, always discredit and weaken us in general; and much oftener prove hurtful, than advantageous, to any of us in particular. But to cultivate the good Opinion of the Wise and Virtuous, to recommend ourselves to Their Protection, and, whatever else they may differ about, engage their common Zeal in the common Cause of Religion; this will procure us both Security and Honour, and every way promote the great Design of our Profession.

Another Point, which our Character will not a little depend upon, is our being, in a reasonable degree, disinterested. A very large Proportion indeed of the Clergy have too much Cause to endeavour at bettering their Circumstances: and it is barbarous Treatment, to accuse them for it, instead of pitying them. But over-great Sollicitude and Contrivance for advancing ourselves will always make Impressions to our Prejudice, let our Condition be ever so low: though deservedly much stronger Impressions, in proportion as it is higher. We shall be thought to have no Attention, but that which we shew too much of: and the truth is, *we cannot serve two Masters.* Nor will it be sufficient, that we avoid the Charge of immoderately desiring more; unless we avoid also that of

Matth. vi. 24.

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Selfiſhneſs, in the Management of what we have already: a Matter, in which it is very difficult, and yet very important, to give no Offence. We are bound both to thoſe who belong to us, and thoſe who ſhall come after us, to take a proper Care of our legal Dues: and preſerve them faithfully from the Encroachments of ſuch as tell us very truly, that we ought not to be worldly-minded; but forget what is equally true, that they themſelves ought not to be ſo. But then the ſtrongeſt Reaſons of all kinds oblige us, never to make unjuſt or litigious Claims; never to do any thing, either hard and rigorous, or mean and ſordid: to ſhew we deſire always the moſt eaſy and amicable Method of ending Diſputes; and whatever Method we may be forced to take, never to let any thing force us into the leaſt degree of Unfairneſs, Paſſion or Ill-will; but endeavour, by all Inſtances of friendly Behaviour, to win, if poſſible, upon the Perſon we have to do with; at leaſt to convince every body elſe, how very far we are from intending Wrong to Him or any one.

AND nothing will contribute more, to acquit us from the Suſpicion of being ſelfiſh in our Dealings with other Perſons; than approving ourſelves charitable to the Poor: a Virtue which becomes us ſo extremely, and is ſo peculiarly expected from us, and will give us ſo valuable an Influence; that we ſhould willingly ſtraiten ourſelves in almoſt any thing beſides, that, to the full Proportion of our Abilities, we may abound in giving Alms. And together

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together with this, would we but, each in his Station, take the beſt Care we can to ſee Juſtice done them in that Proviſion, which the Law hath intended for them, it would generally prove a much more conſiderable Benefaction, than all we are able to beſtow on them of our own.

To the above-mentioned Inſtances of right Conduct we muſt always add, what will render them very engaging, the occaſional kind Offices of good Neighbourhood; with a decent Hoſpitality alſo, if our Circumſtances will permit it: and then, notwithſtanding the Cenſures and ill Endeavours of thoſe, who complain we are of little Uſe, and wiſh we were of none; we may ſurely well hope to do ſervice to God, and be eſteemed of Men: eſpecially if, together with ſo exemplary a Behaviour towards others, we are friendly and compaſſionate, candid and equitable amongſt ourſelves.

GREAT Injuſtice, I am ſatisfied, is done us on this Head: and many groundleſs Accuſations brought confidently againſt us, by Perſons who neither enquire into Facts, nor conſider Circumſtances. But there are few things, in which it concerns us more, to clear ourſelves where we are innocent, and to amend ourſelves where we are faulty. For ſo long as we are thought in the World, either inſolent to our inferior Brethren in general, or void of Generoſity and Pity to ſuch of them as we employ; we muſt not expect to receive better Treatment, than we are underſtood to give. And if we are believed to be chargeable, beyond other Men, with mutual

Bitterneſs

Bitterneſs and Vehemence, when any Kind of Controverſy riſes amongſt us, this too is a Character ſo very different from that which ought to be ours, that the utmoſt Care ſhould be taken to guard againſt it. Not that we are obliged, either to ſpeak of or behave to Men of bad Lives, or bad Principles, as if they were good ones, becauſe unhappily they belong to our Order. Making no Diſtinction would be on all Accounts wrong: and making a proper Diſtinction will be very uſeful. But then we ſhould never think worſe of our Brethren, than Evidence forces us; never publiſh our ill Opinion, without ſufficient Reaſon; nor exceed, when we do publiſh it, the Bounds of Moderation: we ſhould be ready to ſhew them all fitting Kindneſs, even whilſt they continue blameable; and receive them back with the moſt charitable Tenderneſs, when they return to their Duty. For there is no Manner of need, that we ſhould give either ſo much Advantage or ſo much Pleaſure to the Adverſaries of Religion, as to let them ſee thoſe, who ſhould be the joint-defenders of it, engaged in domeſtick Wars: and bringing ſuch Charges, and raiſing ſuch Prejudices, one againſt another, that it is hard to ſay, whether believing or diſbelieving our mutual Accuſations will make the World think worſe of us. Our Bleſſed Lord therefore, after reminding his Diſciples, that *they were the ſalt of the Earth*; were deſigned, by the Purity of their Doctrine and Example, to keep others from Corruption; and after giving them that prophetick Warning, which we ſhall find Men zealous to fulfil

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fill, that *if the salt have lost its savour, it shall be*
tth. v. 13. *cast out and trodden under foot*; resuming the same Figure at another Time, concludes his Exhorta-
rk ix. 50. tion thus, *Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.*

THESE, Brethren, are the things, which, if we have any Concern for the Interests of Religion or our own, we must always endeavour after; but especially in such times, as by no means admit of Negligence or Mismanagement. And vain after all will our best Endeavours be, unless we constantly add to them our fervent Prayers, that God would enable and strengthen, both us, and all that serve him in the Gospel of his Son, to perform our Duty with Faithfulness and Success. For *we are not sufficient*
Cor. iii. 5. *to think any thing of ourselves: our sufficiency is of God.* What therefore we ought, every one of us, to beg of him at all Times, let us all at present jointly address to him for, in the comprehensive and expressive Words of our publick Service.

cond Collect for *Good-iday.*

Almighty and Everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole Body of the Church is governed and sanctified; receive our Supplications and Prayers, which we offer before thee for all Estates of Men in thy holy Church: that every Member of the same, in his Vocation and Ministry, may truly and godly serve thee, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

FINIS.

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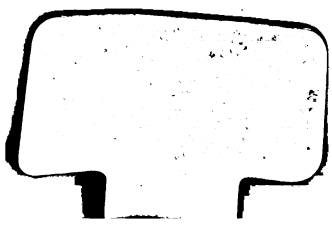

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